



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

JAN 30 1992

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Gary Cummins
Superintendent
Petrified Forest National Park
Arizona 86028

Dear Mr. Cummins:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the **Draft General Management Plan/Development Concept Plans/Environmental Impact Statement for Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona**. Our comments on this draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and §309 of the Clean Air Act.

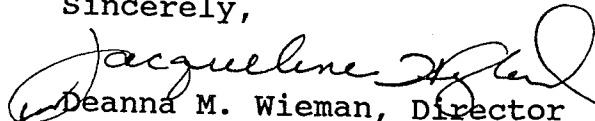
The DEIS identifies and evaluates four alternatives for management, use, and development of Petrified Forest National Park. The proposed alternative includes reorientation of management and use to emphasize the park's globally significant paleontological resources. Activities include construction of a new visitors center and paleontological research facility, relocation and rehabilitation of other facilities, and expansion of park boundaries by acquiring 97,800 acres of land adjacent to the park.

We support the National Park Service's proposal to expand park boundaries to protect the valuable natural resources in the vicinity of the existing park. Nonetheless, we have rated this DEIS as EC-2 -- Environmental Concerns-Insufficient Information (see enclosed "Summary of Rating Definitions and Follow-Up Action"). We are concerned that the proposed alternative should include additional measures to minimize impacts to air and water quality. We recommend that more information regarding pollution prevention, sensitive species, and land acquisition be provided in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS). Our detailed comments are attached.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. Please send a copy of the FEIS to this office at the same time it is officially filed with our Washington, D.C., office. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jacqueline Wyland, Chief of the

Office of Federal Activities, at (515) 744-1584 (FTS 484-1584),
or have your staff contact Jeanne Geselbracht, Office of Federal
Activities, at (415) 744-1576 (FTS 484-1576).

Sincerely,


Deanna M. Wieman, Director
Office of External Affairs

Enclosures

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91-288

1. We support the National Park Service's (NPS) proposal to protect and enhance the valuable natural resources in the vicinity of Petrified Forest National Park by expanding park boundaries. We recommend that the FEIS discuss how NPS would determine whether any of the lands proposed for acquisition contain sites where hazardous wastes were disposed of in past years. The presence of hazardous wastes could diminish the habitat and public recreation values of the proposed acquisition. Furthermore, once the lands became NPS property, NPS would become a potentially responsible party under the terms of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, (CERCLA), as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA). As such, NPS could be legally responsible for remedial investigations, cleanup activities, and full or partial cleanup costs.

2. EPA believes that the scope of the proposed General Management Plan and Development Concept plans presents a significant opportunity for effective implementation of the Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13101) (PPA). The PPA states that:

"pollution should be prevented or reduced at the source whenever feasible; pollution that cannot be prevented should be recycled in an environmentally safe manner, whenever feasible; pollution that cannot be prevented or recycled should be treated in an environmentally safe manner whenever feasible; and disposal or other release into the environment should be employed only as a last resort and should be conducted in an environmentally safe manner.

According to the Council on Environmental Quality, pollution prevention refers to the application of decisions or techniques that avoid or minimize "undesirable changes in the physical, chemical or biological characteristics of our air, land, and water that may or will harmfully affect human life or that of other desirable species, or industrial processes, living conditions, or cultural assets; or that may or will waste or deteriorate our raw material resources."¹

We encourage NPS to incorporate pollution prevention measures into the General Management Plan and Development Concept

¹ From the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) 21st Annual Report (p.81); CEQ, in turn, credits the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council for the definition.

Plans. The FEIS should identify and discuss these measures. The discussion should include plans for source reduction, handling, and disposition of hazardous materials from park facilities such as the research facility, gas station, and maintenance facility. Plans for recycling as well as water and energy conservation should also be discussed.

3. It is NPS's responsibility to implement appropriate nonpoint source pollution control measures and best management practices (BMPs) in order to protect water quality. The FEIS should specify the BMPs and nonpoint source pollution control measures that would be used in implementing the proposed General Management Plan, including construction of all proposed new facilities. The FEIS should also discuss how implementation of these measures would be monitored. We recommend that NPS coordinate with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality in developing appropriate BMPs.

4. The FEIS should specify BMPs that would be used during construction to minimize impacts to air quality, especially from particulates.

5. The FEIS should discuss standards and monitoring measures that would be implemented in operating the sewage ponds.

6. The DEIS discusses avoidance or minimization of impacts to two sensitive plant species that are known to inhabit the park: *Astragalus Xiphoides* and *Pediocactus papyracanthus*. The letter from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, dated February 18, 1988, and included in the DEIS as Appendix B, identifies two additional sensitive plant species. The FEIS should discuss plans to survey for these additional species during appropriate seasons and any avoidance or impact minimization measures in the event that they are found prior to or during construction of proposed new facilities.

Environmental Impact of the Action

IO—Lack of Objections

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC—Environmental Concerns

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EO—Environmental Objections

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU—Environmentally Unsatisfactory

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality, public health or welfare. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1—Adequate

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2—Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3—Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From: EPA Manual 1640, "Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment."